

Regional Ecosystem for Workforce Development  
Collaborative

Event 5 – Apache / Navajo



The **Regional Ecosystem for Workforce Development Collaborative** is the Arizona Department of Education's opportunity to strengthen communication and collaboration among employers and community partners, and to gather their feedback with a concentrated focus on developing a strategic talent pipeline with regional Career Technical Education (CTE) and Adult Education programs. The work of the regional collaboratives is an effort to address the regional CTE Superintendent's and CTE directors' challenges and connect CTE programs, and the post-secondary and adult education programs to align more closely with the regional and statewide industry workforce needs.

To facilitate these workforce goals, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) will plan and deliver eleven collaborative meetings throughout 2025 with every county in Arizona. These meetings will be held in partnership with District Superintendents, CTE Work-Based Learning Directors, CTE Directors, Arizona Adult Education Programs, Community Colleges, Workforce agencies, Economic Development Partners, and Industry Leaders. The meetings include presentations from the venue host, ADE leadership staff, and members from regional economic development organizations. The meetings include roundtable discussions with attendees focused on current partnerships and recommendations to strengthen or to develop talent pipelines and to create Work-Based Learning activities with regional employers with CTE and Adult Education Programs.

Information will be collected from each of the regional roundtable discussions and a follow-up survey will be sent to meeting attendees. The information received is compiled by ADE and included in this report.

# The Regional Ecosystem for Workforce Development Collaborative – Apache and Navajo Counties

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, ADE held the fifth of 11 scheduled events in Apache / Navajo Counties and sponsored by Northland Pioneer College.

Location:

Northland Pioneer College

1611 S. Main St., Snowflake, AZ

Time: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

170 people were invited to the meeting, 42 registered, and 33 people attended. The event was arranged to encourage cross-disciplinary dialogue and to create an environment for innovative ideas and partnerships.

Attendees were from the following organizations:

Northern Arizona Vocational Institute of Technology	Arizona Department of Economic Security	Arizona Science Center
The Arizona Governor’s Office	Arizona@WORK Northeast	Empire CAT
Mortenson Construction	Local First Arizona	Navajo Nation Workforce Development
Grow Arizona	Northland Pioneer College	Navajo County
REAL AZ Navajo County	Apache County	Zenni Homes
Northeast Arizona Technological Institute of Vocational Education	AES Clean Energy	Invenergy LLC
Center for the Future of Arizona	Blattner Energy	Arizona Department of Education

## Feedback from the Meeting

To encourage opportunities for improvement, ADE presented four questions. These questions will be the same at each of the 11 events to enable a comparison of responses received across the state. This will also be useful in providing information for other projects. The design of each question was predicated on inquiries ADE receives from community stakeholders, school leaders, and industries. The questions are:

1. What Work-based Learning (WBL)/Apprenticeship opportunities are currently taking place in your organization/community?
2. Based on economic development information, what gaps in your school/college need to be addressed to develop a talent pipeline to meet employment needs?
3. Who else from this community needs to be involved in this discussion?
4. What are the next steps?

**Question Number One:**

What WBL/Apprenticeships opportunities are currently taking place in your organization/community? The

responses were diversified as the respondents covered the spectrum of WBL and Apprenticeship experiences. The most mentioned activity is internship programs. An internship program is a structured training initiative within a company that helps current and new employees develop skills needed for specific roles. This type of program is identified mostly from the construction industry, as the areas development projects have increased.

Additional responses to other activities and work-based learning techniques were mentioned. Although a few of the activity or program definitions provided may not be specifically WBL or apprenticeship programs, they did show the willingness to create meaningful programs that connect students with career development. The takeaway is that there are many opportunities for work-based learning and career development in addition to the recognized programs. The region is unique and often must be creative with the opportunities available that will provide the best outcomes for the students. Below are the types of programs and mention count as provided by the participants.

AWS Certification Prep and Training - 1

Block Training for Students – 1

Business Open House – 1

Customized Training – 2

Grow AZ Business Training – 1

Home and House-Training Program – 1

In - Person Apprenticeship Programs Paid / Non-Paid – 4

In - Person Internship Paid / Non-Paid - 6

Job shadowing – 3

Navajo Technical University Business Partnerships – 1

Site Visit and Training – 1

Virtual Internship Paid / Non-Paid – 2

Work Experience (WEX) - 1

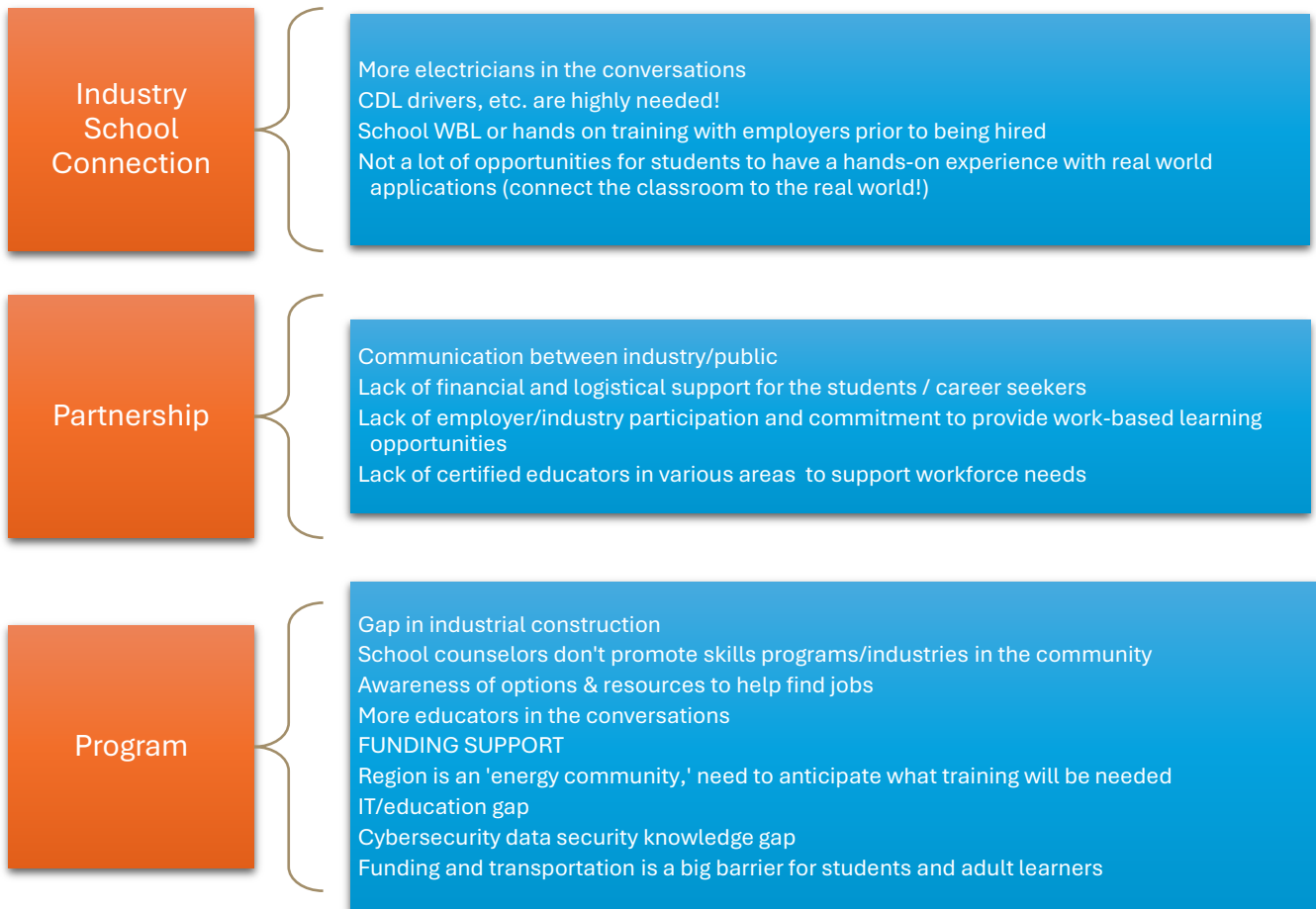
## Question Number Two:

Based on economic development information, what are the gaps in your school / college that need to be addressed to develop a talent pipeline to meet employment needs? Responses from this question are annotated in three categories:

- Industry / School Connection
- Program Gaps
- Partnerships

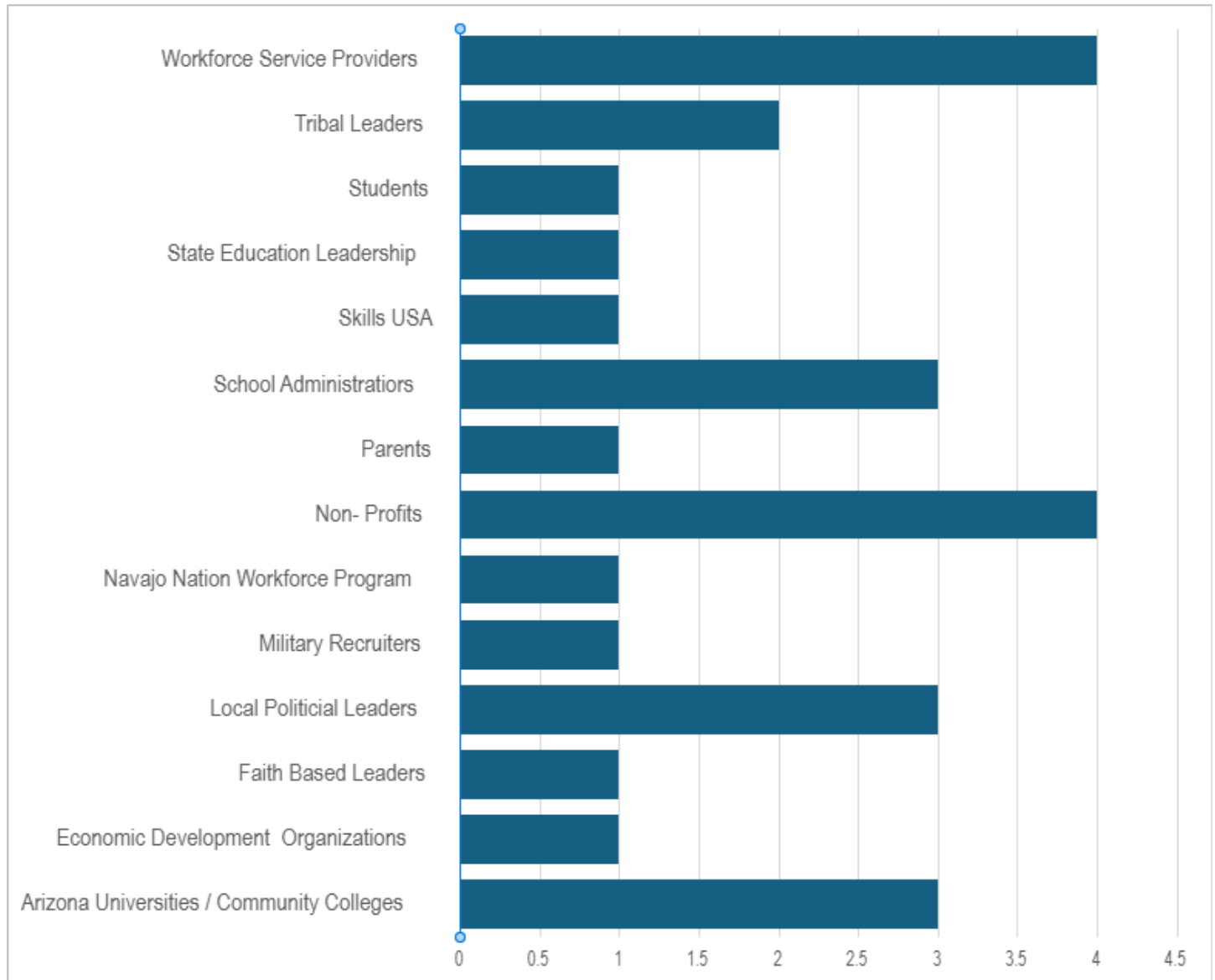
**Industry / School Connection** refers to program alignment between the CTE and/or adult education programs, community college, and industry/employers. The comments reflect the attendee's perceptions and experiences with CTE programs or CTE students or community colleges. **Program** gaps are perceived or experienced deficiencies, challenges, or feedback on the performance of CTE or community college programs, or the makeup of the students in these programs. **Partnerships** are proposed or perceived gaps in collaboration, communication, or awareness of CTE programs or post-secondary opportunities.

The purpose of incorporating the whole workforce development ecosystem in these round table conversations is to discover room for improvement or challenges experienced by these partners. The information provided was expressed by the participants. (See comments below)



**Question Number Three:**

Who else from this community needs to be involved in this discussion? This question asks the attendees from their perspective, who, not in attendance, would benefit from attending the event. Although there were representatives present from most of these organizations and every organization mentioned was invited, the desire to have more representation was apparent. The category with the most interest that was identified to be critical for these types of discussions are workforce service providers and non-profits. Others include school administrators, political leaders, and post-secondary education partners. The table below displays the responses.



#### **Question Number Four:**

“What are the next steps?” From the information collected, what should your next steps be? This question explores from the perspective of the attendees what they have learned and what they are experiencing, what the next steps can be or what they are interested in exploring. Below are the comments provided:

- Include financial literacy in CTE for students
- Know your stakeholders conduct new introduction 'meet n greet'
- Create more community focus discussions with workforce development
- Market CTE with Billboards and video testimonials from students and employers
- Build more internships / apprenticeships
- Dept of Education and Dept of Economic Security - MORE collaboration
- Increase career exploration/awareness opportunities by connecting industry, education, students and career seekers
- Create near-peer mentorships to influence the next generation workforce
- Remove red tape and expedite process to get training programs in place
- Find adequate resources (funding) to allow all students access to CTE programs
- Keep the network alive - keep connecting
- Continue to look for innovative programs

#### **The Survey**

As stated, the purpose of the meeting was to gather information from the region regarding CTE and Adult Education Programs. In addition to the roundtable discussion and presentations, ADE distributed a survey to all attendees. The survey was designed to capture more feedback on the programs and ideas and use the comments to develop an actionable plan. Another objective was to discover who the participants would prefer to continue the conversation to address barriers or enhancements to CTE, Adult Education programs. We sent the survey to every participant after the Regional Ecosystem for Workforce Development Collaborative meeting. The survey asked the following seven questions.

1. Based on what you have learned, how likely are you going to start (or change) a work-based learning opportunity?
2. What do you need to know more about to participate in a successful WBL program (select up to three)?
3. What are the main benefits of partnering with CTE programs?
4. Which partnerships would you like to expand or learn more about (select all that apply)?

5. Who should lead this conversation going forward? (Select Two).
6. What industry-education partnerships or initiatives are currently operating in your area?
7. How valuable was the event to you or your organization?

Of the 33 people who attended the event, 12 (36%) responded to the survey. It is common that survey participation can range from 25-40%, 36% is a positive indicator.

**Question Number One:**

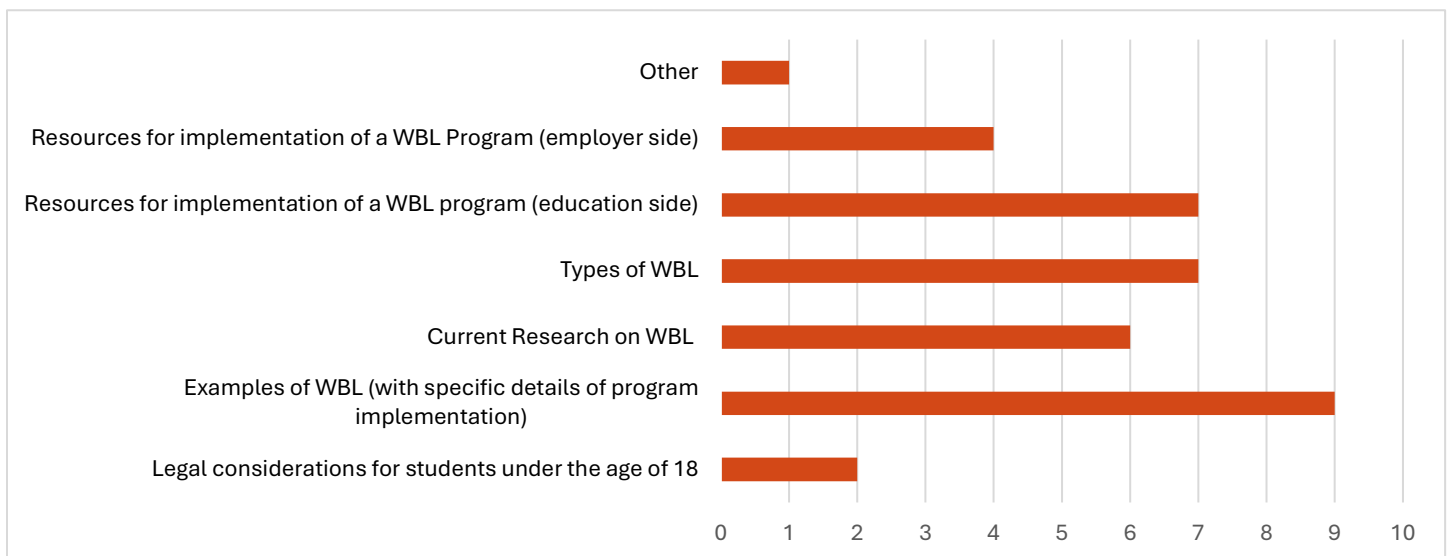
Based on what you have learned, how likely are you going to start (or change) a work-based learning opportunity?

The results were based on a 1-to-5 criteria, with one representing least likely and five representing most likely. The average rating of 4.0 (75%) indicates that most participants either plan to begin or continue engaging in work-based learning (WBL) programs or opportunities. However, the survey comments and feedback suggest that a lack of information about WBL methods and their impact may undermine participants' confidence in the concept.

**Question Number Two:**

What do you need to know more about to participate in a successful WBL program (select up to three)? The

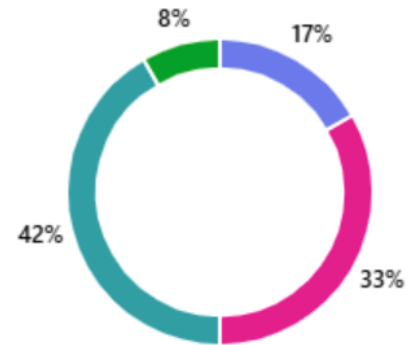
findings indicate a clear need for more transparent information on how to create and build Work-Based Learning (WBL) programs. The Top three indicators show that there is a need, for examples of a successful WBL, clarity on what types of WBL are active in the area and what resources are available to support WBL. Efforts are currently underway to improve statewide communication of program guidelines and success stories. Additional insights are presented in the chart below.



**Question Number Three:**

What are the main benefits of partnering with CTE programs? The purpose of this question is to discover from the participant's perspective the benefit of working with a CTE program. The majority responses (42%) said “to provide an economic opportunity for your community.” This indicates the local investment perspective on how the participants value CTE programs. There was one comment made under Other, stated “Assist industries statewide”. (See the graph below.)

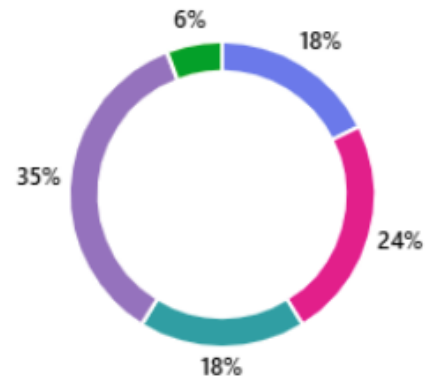
● Fill staffing needs	2
● Enhance student understanding of your industry	4
● Provide an economic opportunity for your community	5
● To grow your organization	0
● Other	1



**Question Number Four:**

Which partnerships would you like to expand or learn more about? This question had four options: economic development, CTE programs, Community College, and workforce. Most of the participants selected Workforce (35%), second was CTE Programs (24%), Economic Development (18%) and Community College (18%). Two attendees selected “Other” and wrote in Navajo Nation and Public Schools to partnership with Arizona Job Connection. This is consistent with the other regions as workforce, economic development, and CTE Programs are woven into the very fabric of workforce development. This also states that administrators and community partners would like more frequent information on local businesses and business staffing needs and community partnerships.

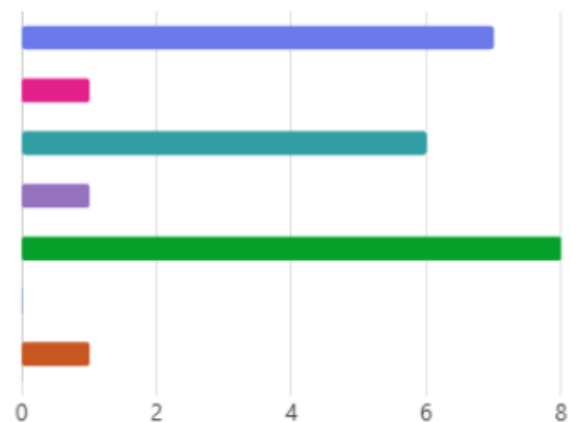
● Economic Development	6
● CTE Programs	8
● Community College	6
● Workforce	12
● Other	2



**Question Number Five:**

Who should lead this conversation going forward? This question aimed to gather participants' insights on who should lead the ongoing ecosystem collaboration discussions, manage the detailed efforts to enhance student employment opportunities, and support workforce talent pipeline development. Respondents favored the local Workforce Development Board as the top choice, followed closely by local economic development organizations and the local CTED. This question also had one that selected “other” as their response. The stated recommendation is that local employers should lead the conversation in CTE and Adult Education workforce development. The local Chamber of Commerce was identified the least likely option. (See the graph below.)

● Local economic development organization	7
● Local school district	1
● Local CTED	6
● Local elected officials	1
● Local Workforce Development Board	8
● Local Chamber of Commerce	0
● Other	1



**Question Number Six:**

What industry-education partnerships or initiatives are currently operating in your area? This question asks the attendees to name the current partnerships in their local region. The importance of this information is to identify existing local partnerships that are already working well. There were a few comments that indicated challenges in establishing partnerships; however, many of the comments indicated that internships are the preferred method of an industry-education partnership. Other comments and current partnership methods are below.

Schools partnered with hotels and health centers.	The local college NPC and the counties hiring students for the summer, provide experience to different trades	We conduct internships with local businesses and connect with workforce development entities on the state level to provide information and opportunities	Initial partnerships with ASU, NPC, NAU	CTE - Good Jobs Network- Grow AZ
CTE partnership with Manufacturing, Construction, Medical Assistants, RV Maintenance, Nontechnical Skills Programming.	Limited internships and semi-annual advisory board meetings.	Northland Pioneer College now offers renewable energy learning in ITT programs.	Northland Pioneer College certifications, CTE & Skills USA Certification programs	

**Question Number Seven:**

How valuable was the event to you or your organization? This question sought to determine the value of the meeting. Was the meeting meaningful to the attendees or did they feel it was an effective use of their time?

Respondents were to answer the question using a 1-to-5 scale, with one being not valuable and 5 being most valuable.

A few of the comments collected included: “It was valuable to meet other WD people in my area, but the training was too short and there wasn’t enough opportunity to connect with everyone else.” “It allowed us as WIOA/Arizona@ Work to meet and great with other employers and organizations in the area needing help from our services” , “It was a good connection to more industries and individuals facilitating apprenticeships. Most of the information I was already aware of”, “The event clearly shows that lack of connection to high school seniors who can help fill open job opportunities in the White Mountains”, “I loved the collaboration and discussion!”, and “Made connections with organizations that I was unaware of”.

58% of the respondents selected 5, indicated the meeting was very valuable. The lowest response was from one attendee who rated the event as 3. The total rating was 4.50 out of 5 (90%).

**Conclusions**

Local schools and businesses have shared interest and shared responsibility to the community they serve. Both entities are affected by the outcomes of schooling, which provide students with learning experience that supports their ability to make a measurable contribution to and receive meaningful benefits from the society they will join and lead in the future. The good news is that business, economic development, and local workforce leaders perceive a shared responsibility for and show eagerness to support the work of educating students.